



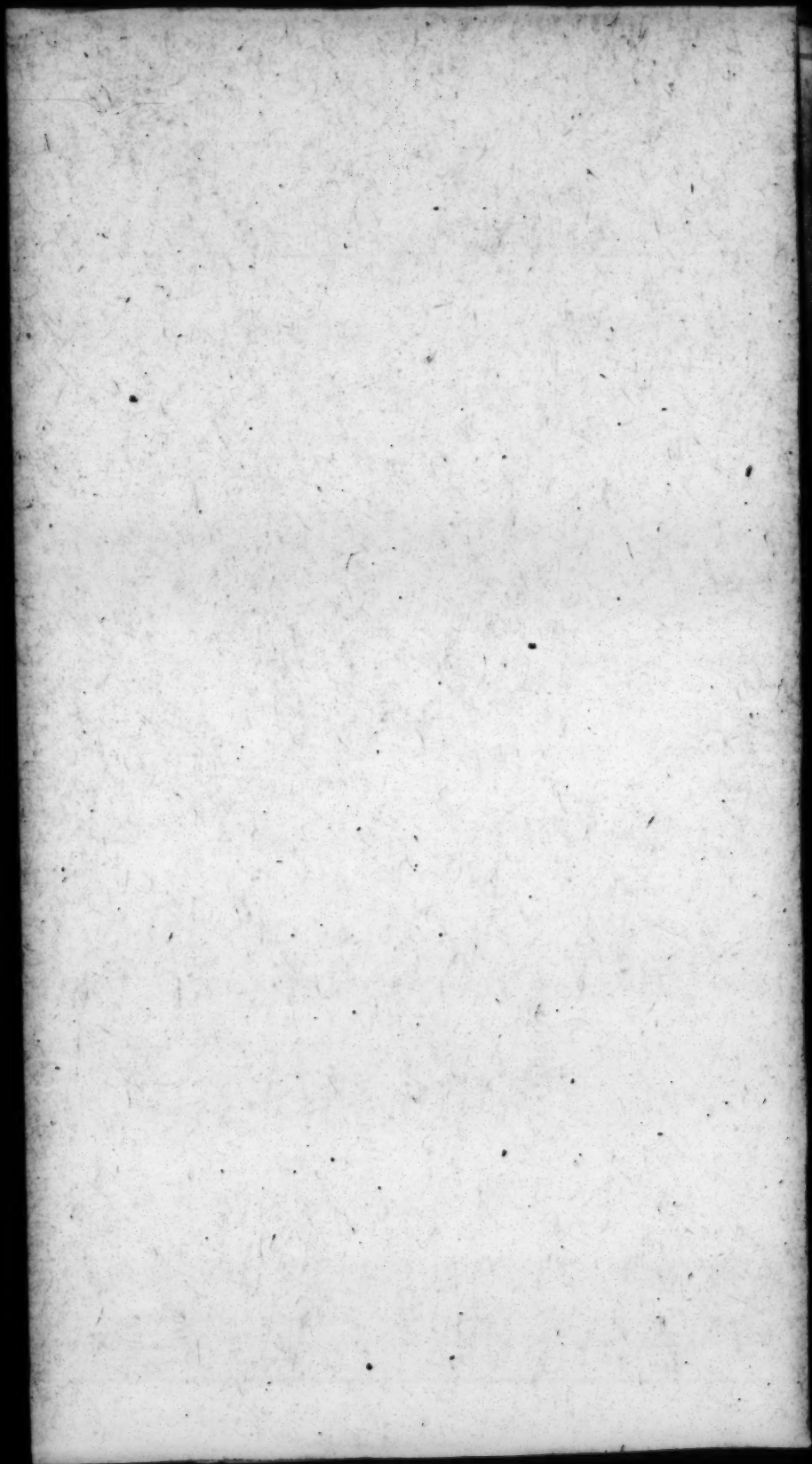
Roberts del.

M^{RS} CRAWFORD as MARIAMNE.

— With my Innocence —

London. Printed for J. Bell, Eridith Library, Strand Dec. 20 1794.





BRITISH THEATRE



MARIAMNE.

*Alas! I have been so long and she
gave a sigh!*

TI

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Eo

MARIAMNE.

A

TRAGEDY,

BY MR. FENTON.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK.

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation.

LONDON :

Printed for, and under the Direction of
JOHN BELL, British Library, STRAND,
Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES:

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
JOHN, LORD GOWER,
BARON OF STITTENHAM.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordship's known candour and humanity were never more conspicuous, than when you condescended to promote the interest of the following tragedy. An imperfect essay! at first attempted only for a private amusement, and formed on the model of the ancient Greek drama; but I was afterwards prevailed upon by my friend Mr. Southern's importunity, to bring it on the stage. The uncommon success which it met with there, I have not the vanity to ascribe to any merit in the play; but owe it purely to the general disposition of the town, to give a kind reception to whatever comes recommended with your Lordship's protection. Let your goodness, my Lord, indulge the ambition I have that it should now appear in the world under your patronage; and allow me the honor of ever being, with the most perfect esteem and gratitude—

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obliged, and

Most obedient servant,

ELIJAH FENTON.

PROLOGUE.

Written by a FRIEND.

WHEN breathing statues mould'ring waste away,
And tombs, unfaithful to their trust, decay ;
The muse recalls the suffering good to fame,
Or wakes the prosp'rous villain into shame ;
To the stern tyrant gives fictitious power,
To reign the restless monarch of an hour.

Obedient to her call, this night appears
Great Herod rising from a length of years :
A name enlarged with titles not his own,
Servile to mount, and savage on the throne :
Whose bold ambition trembling Jewry view'd,
In blood of half her royal race imbru'd.
But now reviving in the British scene,
He looks majestic with a milder mien :
His features soften'd with the deep distress
Of love, made greatly wretched by excess :
From lust of power to jealous fury tost,
We shew the tyrant in the lover lost.

If no compassion, when his crimes are weigh'd,
To his ill-fated fondness must be paid,

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*Yet see, ye fair ! and see with pitying eyes
The bright, afflicted, Mariamne rise.
No fancy'd tale ; our opening scenes disclose
Historick truth, and swell with real woes.
Awful in virtuous grief the Queen appears,
And strong the eloquence of royal tears.
Then let her fate your kind attention raise,
Whose perfect charms were but her second praise :
Beauty and virtue your protection claim ;
Give tears to beauty, and to virtue fame.*

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

HEROD the Great	- - - -	Mr. Smith,
His young Son.		
PHERORAS, the King's Brother	- -	Mr. Gardner.
SOHEMUS, first Minister	- - -	Mr. Bensley.
NARBAL, a Lord of the Queen's Party	-	Mr. Clarke.
HAZEROTH, a young Lord related to the Queen.		
High-Priest	- - - -	Mr. Hull.
SAMEAS, the King's Cup-bearer	- -	Mr. Davis.
FLAMINIUS, a Roman General	- -	Mr. Wroughton.

Women.

MARIAMNE	- - - -	Mrs. Hartley.
SALOME, the King's Sister	- -	Miss Shirman.
ARSINOE, chief Attendant on the Queen	-	Mrs. Mattocks.

Guards, Messengers, Attendants.

SCENE, a Room of State in HEROD's Palace at Jerusalem.

Enter

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MARIAMNE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter PHERORAS, NARBAL, and SOHEMUS.

Pheroras.

THE morning in her richest purple rob'd,
Smiles with auspicious lustre on the day
Which brings my royal brother back from Rhodes,
Confirm'd in empire by the general voice
Of Cæsar and the Senate.

Nar. This bless'd day
In latest annals shall distinguish'd shine,
Sacred to majesty, and dear to love:
The same which saw the royal lovers march
In nuptial pomp, revolving, now restores
Herod to Mariamne, and his crown.

Sohe. Fortune at length to merit grows a friend;
Or fate ordain'd the happiest stars to shed
Their influence on his birth; or sure, since Rome,
With civil discord rent, so oft hath chang'd
Her own great lords (as bleeding conquest rais'd,
Or sunk the doubtful balance), we had shar'd
The same vicissitudes of restless power.

Nar. Herod avow'd the dear respect he bore

To Antony, and dropp'd a generous tear
To grace his ruins.

Pher. Yes, and Cæsar sat
Pensive and silent; in his anxious breast,
Perhaps, revolving, that, of all his train,
Who proudly wanton in his mounted rays,
Gay, flutt'ring insects of a summer noon,
How few would bear the wintry storms of fate!
At length, he smiling rose, receiv'd the crown
From Herod's hand, and plac'd it on his brow,
Crying, shine there! for Cæsar cannot find
A worthier head to wear thee.

Sobe. From the grace
Of such a victor to receive a crown,
With such peculiar attributes of fame,
Confers more glory than a chronicle
Of scepter'd ancestors.

Pher. Narbal, your care
Will see due honours to the day discharg'd.
Let the shrill trumpet's cheerful note injoin
A general feast; and joy, with loud acclaim,
Through all the streets of Solyma resound.
"Let steams of grateful incense cloud the sky,
"Till the rich fragrance reach the utmost bounds
Of Herod's empire. Let each smiling brow
Wear peaceful olive, whilst the virgin choirs
Warbling his praise, his paths with flow'rs perfume,
"Who guards Judea with the shield of Rome."

[Exit Narbal.]

Sobe. My Lord, the province you've assign'd agrees
With Narbal's talents; none is better form'd

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Sobe.

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To gild the pageant of a gaudy day :
 He's nobly born, and popularly vain,
 Rare tinsel stuff t' adorn a room of state !
 But in the counsel, where the public care——

Pher. In that high sphere you, Sohemus, alone
 Must ever shine : and may your wisdom raise
 Your master's fortune, to divide the globe
 With this new Cæsar ; “ and no longer sway
 “ A short, precarious sceptre, which must shake
 “ With each tempestuous gust that blows from Rome.”

Sohe. With blushes I must hear you call me wise,
 When one impassion'd woman can destroy
 My surest plans, and with a sigh blow down
 The firmest fabric of deliberate thought.
 Heav'n's ! that a king consummate for a throne,
 So wise in council, and so great in arms,
 Should, after nine long years, remain a slave,
 Because his wife is fair ! “ What art thou, beauty,
 “ Whose charm makes sense and valour grow as tame
 “ As a blind turtle ?”

Pher. Is thy wisdom proof
 Against the blandishments of warm desire ?
 It ill defends thee from Arsinoë's charms :
 The sullen sweetness of a down-cast eye,
 A feign'd unkindness, or a just reproach,
 Breath'd in a sigh, and soften'd with a tear,
 Would make thy rigid marble melt like snow
 On the warm bosom of the youthful spring.

Sohe. In thoughtless youth, gay nature gives the rein
 To love, and bids him urge the full career :
 But Herod should restrain his head-strong course,

Now reason is mature.

Pher. He never can ;

For Mariamne, with superior charms,
Triumphs o'er reason ; in her look she bears
A paradise of ever-blooming sweets ;
Fair as the first idea beauty prints
On the young lover's soul ; " a winning grace
" Guides every gesture, and obsequious love
" Attends on all her steps ; for majesty
" Streams from her eye, to each beholder's heart,
" And checks the transport which her charms inspire."
Who would not live her slave !—Nor is her mind
Form'd with inferior elegance—By her,
So absolute in every grace, we guess
What essence angels have.

Sobe. Who can admire

The brightest angel, when his hand unsheathes
The vengeful sword, or with dire pestilence
Unpeople's nations ? If Death sits enthron'd
In the soft dimple of a damask cheek,
He thence can aim his silent dart as sure
As from the wrinkle of a tyrant's frown :
And that 's our case. Yet, with a lover's eye,
You view the gay malignance that will blast
Both you and all your friends.

Pher. We sure may praise

The snake that glitters in her summer pride,
And yet beware the sting.

Sobe. But low in dust

Crush the crown'd basilisk, or else she kills
Whate'er her eye commands—You need, my lord,

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No clearer light than this, by which to read
The purpose of my soul.

Pher. Tho' 'tis obscure,

It strikes like lightning, that with fear confounds
The pale night-wanderer, whilst it shews the path.
You, Sohemus, have cause to think the queen
Charges the taking off her uncle's head
To your advice; and gladly would atone
Her kindred blood with yours: revenge still glows,
Though hid in treacherous embers; and you 'il feel
The dire effect, whene'er occasion breathes
Agaile to waken and foment the flame.

"But I, unpractis'd in th' intrigues of courts,
"And disciplin'd in camps, will not supply,
"Increase of fuel to these home-bred jars:
"I hope the king will see them soon suppress'd;
"Or care succeeding care will ever tread
"The circle of his crown."

Sobe. If to pursue

The safest measures to secure his throne,
Shall irritate the queen to make me fall
A victim to her rage, the conscious pride
Of having acted what the king ordain'd—

Enter Messenger with a letter to Pheroras.

Will yet support me. 'Tis not worth my care,
Whether the trembling hand of age must shake
From the frail glass my last remaining sand,
Or fortune break the phial, ere the sum
Of half my life is told.

Pher. 'Tis from the king:

A most displeasing message for the queen.

Sobe. May I, my lord, partake?

Pher. The infant prince

Must live an hostage of the league at Rome:
Cæsar hath sent a minister of trust,
With guards to wait him. This, perhaps, the king
Hath kept conceal'd, that his return might calm
Th' afflicted queen, and soften the surprise.

Sobe. Names he, my lord, the general to whose care
The prince must be consign'd?

Pher. Rome could not choose,
For that high charge, a nobler delegate
Than my Flaminius; for a bolder hand
Ne'er flew her conquering eagles at their prey.
"We in the Parthian wars together learn'd
"The rudiments of arms; the summer sun
"Hath seen our marches measur'd by his own:
"In battle so intrepid, that he shew'd
"An appetite of danger." Oft I've heard
The weary veterans, resting on their spears,
Swear, by the gods and majesty of Rome,
They blush'd with indignation, to behold
The garland of the war, by partial fate,
Transferr'd from their's, to grace a stripling's brow—
But I with Narbal will prevail, t' impart
This most ungrateful order to the queen. [Exit.

Enter SALOME.

Sal. I hope, my lord, young Hazeroth's affront
Will not pass unresented?

Sobe. I've dispatch'd
A message to the king: th' account I gave

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Imported nothing but severest truth ;
Yet wittiest malice scarce could feign a roll
Of keener calumnies.

" *Sal.* He mention'd me !

" *Sobe.* Traduc'd you basely, by the opprobrious
name

" Of Idumæan spinster, in degree

" The third descendant of an Heathen slave,

" Who kept Apollo's temple.

" *Sal.* The king's veins

" Hold the same blood, whatever is the source ;

" And if the wretch survives that vile reproach,

" The king's a slave indeed. What was your crime ?

" *Sobe.* He said, by my sole counsels were destroy'd

" All of the royal Asmonæan race,

" Whom justice made the victims of the state ;

" Whose injur'd discontented ghosts too long

" Had cry'd revenge ! but should not cry in vain :

" Then half unsheath'd his sabre."

Sal. That vain boy

" Believes his near relation to the queen,

" Exempts his haughty youth from all restraint."

He's Mariamne's echo, and repeats

But half her menaces.

Sobe. What time more fit

To put her threats in act, than when the king

Flies with redoubled ardour to her arms ?

Passion in proves with absence ; and his heart,

So soft and passive to the power of love,

Will then be vacant only to his queen.

B

Fortune of late a glorious scene disclos'd,
 But soon snatch'd back the visionary joy.
 The blissful hour is past—Curs'd, doubly curs'd
 Be this boy emperor, who tamely spar'd
 The warmest friend that Antony could boast !
 Had Herod perish'd by his vengeful sword,
 I soon had sent (for so he left in charge)
 His queen, the worshipp'd idol of his soul,
 To attend him to the shades—Clouds of despair
 Now terminate our view !

Sal. Can you discern
 No glimmering hope ? Though dim, the distant ray
 May serve to steer our course.

Sobe. The king will send
 His son for hostage, to reside in Rome.

Sal. Were tripple thunder vollied at the queen,
 It could not rend her bleeding bosom more
 Than such a message.

Sobe. At this little spark,
 Discord may light her ever-burning torch :
 Th' imperious queen, perhaps, will edge her tongue
 With keen resentments for her ruin'd race :
 " For 'tis th' infirmity of noblest minds,
 " When ruffled with an unexpected woe,
 " To speak what settled prudence would conceal ;
 " As the vex'd ocean, working in a storm,
 " Oft brings to light the wrecks, which long lay calm
 " In the dark bosom of the secret deep."
 From such reproach, his pointed joy may change
 To coldness and distrust, perhaps to hate ;

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Mari.

And their high souls, that now, like friendly stars,
Mingling their beams, in mutual ardour shine,
In fiercest opposition then will thwart
Each others influence, and divide the court :
Then, mischief, to thy work !——

Sal. In me you'll find
A sure assistant : Shall Pheroras join ?

Sobe. I'd fly him at the quarry, but I fear
He'd check if other game should cross the flight :
“ He scorns dissimulation, nor perceives
“ That nature never meant simplicity
“ A grace to charm in courts :” he serves the crown
With such a blind disinterested zeal,
He's even proud to obey.

Sal. Let him enjoy
His cold-complexion'd principles, and fall
A traitor to himself.

Sobe. O, Princess ! born
To bless the world with a long progeny
Of future heroes ; “ and renew the strain
“ Of valour, which the softness of your sex
“ Unspirited at first !” so great a soul
Deserves, and sure is destin'd to a throne !
But hark !

Sal. The Queen's approaching ; she repairs
To sacrifice.

Sobe. 'Tis best we both retire.

[*Excunt.*

Enter MARIAMNE and ARSINOE.

Mari. The Princess and her friend were unprepar'd

B ij

To pay the decencies the day requires :

“ The most unpractis’d in the courtier’s art,

“ And they who hate us most, might sure vouchsafe

“ A smooth unmeaning compliment at least.”

But night-born treason is too tender-ey’d,

To bear the blaze of dazzling Majesty,

And seeks the guilty shade.

Arsi. They ’re both depriv’d

Of your propitious smile ; so dire a loss

Would cloud the most serene.

Mari. That sullen gloom

Proceeds not from a conscience of their crimes

“ Which sues by penitence for royal grace ;”

But argues high contempt : their brows display

A banner of defiance, and avow

Their trait’rous combination : “ but I’ll quell

“ The tow’ring crest of their presumptuous hate,

“ Or perish in th’ attempt.” Henceforth forbear

All commerce with the Princess, and her train :

For fear the infection of example taint

Your sound allegiance.

Arsi. If a single thought

Were tinctur’d with disloyalty, this hand

Should pierce my heart to drive the rebel out.

Your strict command with pleasure I obey :

For at the sight of Salome, my breast

Shivers with chilling horror, and revolves

The destiny which a Chaldaean seer

Of late foretold. The pious sage had pass’d

Full sixty winters in a private cell :

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His locks were silver'd o'er with reverend white ;
 And on his cheeks appear'd the pale effect
 Of studious abstinence : his custom was
 In his small hermitage t' outwatch the moon,
 To marshal in his schemes the host of Heaven ;
 And from their ruling influence at the birth,
 Form'd his predictions. As the Princess pass'd
 I ask'd him if his foresight could discern
 The colour of her fate ; he answer'd, Black !
 'Tis black chequer'd with blood ! deep in her breast
 I see the dagger, doom'd by Heaven's decree
 To cut her half-spun thread.

Mari. What powerful cause
 Urg'd you to hear a vain diviner tell
 His waking dreams ? Perhaps you went to know
 What happy star presided o'er the love,
 Which Sohemus, I hear, address'd to you :
 If so, I'll be your oracle ; " forbear
 " T'enquire the doubtful omens of the sky,
 " And fix your faith on this unerring truth :"
 If your ill-judging choice mislead your heart,
 To meet his passion with an equal flame ;
 Henceforth for ever banish'd from my sight,
 In exile you shall end an odious life ;
 Attended only in that friendless state
 By black remorse, which step by step pursues
 Th' ingrateful and the false.

Arxi. I long have felt
 Th' afflicting hand of Heaven, without the guilt
 Of murmur or complaint : but to be thought

False and ingrateful, is too much to bear.
Chase that suspicion from your royal mind;
Nor cast my blameless innocence a prey
To those who envy your distinguish'd grace,
With which I've long been honour'd.

Mari. To receive

Private addresses from my deadliest foe;
A wretch! whose dark infernal arts have wrought
The ruin of my race, but ill repays
My condescending favour, which vouchsaf'd
To lose the style of subject and of Queen,
In friendship's softer name.

Arsi. While thus I kneel,

Imploring Heaven t' attest my spotless faith,
May I be fix'd a dreadful monument
Of perjur'd guilt, if e'er my bosom gave
Reception to his suit! Were he possess'd
Of all the sun surveys, and form'd to please
With every grace that captivates the soul;
And your command concurrent with his love,
Should urge me to comply; that hard command,
And that alone, I dare to disobey.——

No, my dear Roman! nothing can deface
Thy image from thy virgin-widow's breast;
“The inviolable band of strong desire
“Shall ever join our souls!”

Mar. Dismiss your fears,

And let them with my vanish'd doubt expire:
But, whence this transport of reviving woe?
Recite the series of your fate at large.

Arsi.

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Arsi. When Antony and Cæsar found the globe
Too narrow, to suffice the boundless views
Of two such mighty spirits, my virgin-vow
Was plighted to a brave Patrician youth,
The friend of Cæsar : Antony proscrib'd
The chiefs who sided with his potent foe ;
And foremost in the tablet my lov'd lord
Was doom'd to slaughter : whilst with nuptial joy
His palace rung, crowded with friends who came
To attend the bride's arrival, through the gates
A troop of ruffians rushing in, surpriz'd
And dragg'd him to his fate.

Mari. In that distress

What could you do, and whither did you fly ?

Arsi. At Alexandria, then the fatal cause
Of Antony engag'd my father's sword ;
Thither I fled, and was receiv'd with grace
To Cleopatra's train : with her I came
To Palestine ; where the detested sight
Of Antony so rack'd me, and reviv'd
The sad remembrance of my murder'd Lord,
I begg'd to be dismiss'd. You then receiv'd
The fugitive, whom Fortune's rage hath made
Wretched indeed, but hath not power to make
False or ungrateful.

Mari. Poor Arsinoe !

My favours shall deface the memory
Of past afflictions. On a soul secure
In native innocence, or grief or joy
Should make no deeper prints than air retains :

“ Where fleet alike the vulture and the dove
 “ And leave no trace.” Blind fortune that bestows
 The perishable toys of wealth and power,
 At random oft resumes them, pleas’d to make
 A hurricane of life ; but, the firm mind
 Safe on exalted virtue reigns sedate,
 Superior to the giddy whirls of fate. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

Enter NARBAL and FLAMINIUS.

Narbal.

THE queen will see you, sir ; a just regard
 To Cæsar’s friendship is so sacred here,
 That tho’ on this high jubilee the court
 Suspends all state affairs, the queen vouchsafes
 T’ admit your message to her royal ear.

Flam. Th’ ambassadors at Rome never demand
 Admission more than once : your king defers
 His entry ’till the queen shall execute
 What Cæsar’s will requires.

Nar. That cause alone
 Would urge our prompt compliance ; for the king
 Makes love th’ impatient register of time :
 In his account each moment seems an age,
 That keeps him from his Mariamne’s arms ;
 Who well deserves such passion.

Flam. Distant fame

ACT II.

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Hath pictur'd all her graces on my mind :
Perhaps you 've heard of Dellius.

Nar. What ! the friend
Of Antony ?

Flam. His qualities disgrace
The name of friend ; but in his softer hours
He lik'd him for his elegance of taste
In luxury and love. I heard him tell,
How once when Antony, in amorous pomp,
With Cleopatra sail'd along the Nile,
To grieve the proud Egyptian, he produced
A miniature of Mariamne's face.

Nar. And what said Antony ?

Flam. With vast surprize
He view'd each lineament, but yet forbore
To praise or blame it, which he knew the queen
Would soon interpret love ; but softly sigh'd
And slipt it in his bosom. Strait her cheeks
Glow'd with an angry blush, which faded soon,
And left them lily pale : breathless and faint
She then reclin'd her head, and from his breast
Snatch'd what she fear'd might lie too near his heart :
With amorous reluctance while he strove
To gain the ravish'd prize, she let it fall
(More by design than chance) into the Nile :
He springing up to catch it, half o'erset
The gilded barge ; and with a sterner brow,
And haughtier tone, than e'er she knew before,
He cry'd, your river is too well repaid,
For all the wealth you ow'd——

A Messenger *enters* to Narbal.

Mess. Pheroras, sir,
Desires to see the Roman general.

Nar. Sir, I'll conduct you.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter SOHEMUS *and the* HIGH-PRIEST.

Sobe. But the human mind,
When it is divorc'd from matter, cannot pierce
The distant cloud of dark futurity.
You sleep not sound, my lord ! Old age depress'd
With melancholy damps, oft dwindles down
To second infancy, and then renews
Its cradle dreams ; which superstitious fear
Makes sacred with the venerable names
Of vision, or of prophecy ; devis'd
To cheat the vulgar, and too oft employ'd
To cover disaffection to the state.

High-Pr. I have, my lord, no craving appetites
To glut with gain or titles ; I've attain'd
The highest name my order can receive.
I bear no symptoms of a feverish soul,
Which, turbulent with guilt, aspires t' embroil
The state with trait'rous fiction. You may think,
I who commend myself have brib'd a fool
To be my herald ; yet a modest man,
T' oppose the darts of calumny, may wear
His innocence in sight ; a safer shield
Than adamant, or gold !

Sobe. Your innocence !

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My sister

Did you not talk of omens, which forebode
Th' impending wrath of Heaven to blast the day
Which re-instates our monarch on his throne ?

High-Pr. I did, my lord, and will affirm I saw——
Laugh when you 've heard me out.

[*Exeunt.* *Sobe.* Well, pray proceed.

High-Pr. I walk'd this morning in my palmy grove,
Where oft to contemplation I devote
My earliest hours ; the sun new-rising cheer'd
The face of nature with a purple smile ;
My spirits ran as brisk careers of life,
As ever in the careless prime of youth ;
When issuing sudden from the bow'ry shade,
A beauteous form appear'd, and gliding slow,
Approach'd me with a soft dejected air ;
Then cry'd, ' I liv'd the brother of your queen ;'
And gave a piteous groan !

Sobe. Aristobulus ?

High-Pr. The same, I knew him well.

Sobe. Ha !—What ?—What more ?

Why, he was drown'd, you know—Could I prevent
What heaven fore-doom'd ? My good lord, did he say
That I was accessory ? Why to me
This message from the unapparent shades ?
Speak—speak—I'll hear it.

High-Pr. In his hand he wav'd
An airy streamer, like a sable shroud,
And thus went on : ' If dire designs prevail
Before yond' east displays another dawn,
My sister must exchange her robes of state

For such a weed as this ; by wicked arts
Betray'd, and in the summer of her days
Cut off by bloody hands ! with her will end
The glories of our Asmonæan line ;
Tell what I say to Sohemus alone,
Bid him desist.'

Sohe. I !—What ?

High-Pr. He said no more,
But vanish'd from my view.

Sohe. 'T is best, my lord,
To let such shadows fleet neglected by ;
They argue perturbation in the brain,
Caus'd by black humours ; a few hours will prove
That mimic fancy mock'd your dazzled sight,
With images of air.

High-Pr. Whate'er they prove,
I feel my bosom lighter. [Exit High-Priest.

Sohe. Thou hast laid
A galling weight on mine.

Enter SALOME.

Sal. How now, my lord !
What means this pale confusion in your face ?
“ What makes your hair stand bristling, and your
eyes

“ With gloomy horror glare !”

Sohe. We cheat the world
With florid out-side, 'till we meet surprize ;
Then, conscience, working inward like a mole,

Crumbles the surface, and reveals the dirt
From which our actions spring.

Sal. My lord, recall
Your wandering reason.

Sobe. 'T is in vain to boast
That reason o'er the passions holds the rein,
When quite unmann'd with such a tale——

Sal. What tale?
I met th' high-priest, hath he unfolded aught
That strikes with this amazement?

Sobe. He reports
A message from the visionary shade
Of young Aristobulus; him, who claim'd
By lineal right the crown which Herod wears:
To disembroil the title, whilst he bath'd
I plung'd him, 'till the stifling element
Had quench'd the lamp of life, and charg'd the crime
On faultless destiny!—What makes you smile?

Sal. To see a dotard's fiction, or his dream,
A legend, such as nurseries amuse
A froward child with, have as strong effect
As plain authentic truth! I've heard you prove
By clearest reason, that when death resolves
To its first principles the human frame,
That subtle vapour then, the boasted soul,
Mingles with common air.

Sobe. 'T is not the faith
Of such fantastic forms that quells me thus;
Sudden remorse for murder'd innocence
Wither'd my resolution.

Sal. But revenge
Reviving warmth and spirit will infuse,
And make the drooping branches flourish fair,
Renew'd in second spring. Here Sameas comes,
Whom art and nature exquisitely form
For glorious mischief; him we must secure.

Enter SAMEAS.

Sameas, I'm pleas'd your merits are preferr'd
To bear the royal cup; Pheroras long
Pleaded in vain for Mariamne's grace.

Sameas. If to her grace I ow'd this vital air,
I'd choak myself with generous disdain,
Rather than breathe it: from Pheroras' suit
I date my fortunes, and to him devote
Life, conscience, honour.

Sobe. Gratitude is rare!
Most, after favours are conferr'd, profess
Deep sense of obligation; but when prov'd
In points of nicest moment, have recourse
To conscience, honour, and such trivial phrase,
'T' excuse defect of duty to their friend:
But such a pure, resign'd, implicit zeal,
Excites my wonder, and transcends my praise.

Sameas. Pheroras said, my lord, he'd recommend
To you my poor affairs.

Sobe. Doubt not my care;
Read here thy lot.

[*Pulls out his tablets.*]

Sameas. Make Sameas chamberlain—

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Sobe. F

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Sobe.

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How can I e'er discharge so vast a debt
Of gratitude !

Sobe. How ? Should affairs require
Thy hand, it would not shrink to cut a throat ?

Sameas. I've such a strong antipathy to blood,
I ne'er could sacrifice ; but my revenge
Works a more secret, and a safer way.
No poisonous herbs, which various climes produce,
No venom of the mine, nor reptile, 'scapes
My curious observation : I extract
Their several essences, and know their powers,
And times of operation.

Sobe. To what use !
Had I a dog to be dispatch'd——

Sameas. My art
delights in nobler quarry.

Sobe. Is it stanch ?

Sameas. Point out the game, my lord, you'll find I dare
Do more, than most dare think.

Sobe. Then swear——

Sal. Defer

T' impart your orders till the king's arrived ;
And meet before the banquet.

Sameas. What your will
Enjoins, my duty binds me to perform.

Sobe. Proud queen ! the last decisive hour draws on ;
Destin'd to crown our hope, and end our care :
Aided by this brave friend, whose soul is steel'd
With dauntless resolution, though the ghosts

Of all her race rise grinning from the tomb,
And in their cause auxiliar furies join :
Intrepid we 'll pursue our bold career ;
Pitch the sure toils, and rouse the fated deer.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter MARIAMNE, NARBAL, and ARSINOE.

Mari. His offspring mortgag'd to redeem his crown!
The wild Arabians who delight in blood,
Who live promiscuous, and without restraint
Of laws or manners propagate their kind,
With yearning passion yet preserve their young :
Nature on their unpolish'd marble prints
Much tender sentiments, than some can boast,
Who call them barbarous.

Nar. In the sons of kings
The country claims a right ; and to preserve
The quiet, and the glory of your realm,
The king complies with Cæsar, and will send
The dearest pledge to firm his royal faith.

Mari. Hard fate of greatness, if it thus excludes
A mother's interest in the babe she bore ;
Kings to their country owe their dearest care
In council or in arms ; let that suffice ;
The choicest blessings of indulgent heaven,
Their children, are reserv'd a private right,
To soften and support their public toils.
But, send the prince to Rome ! which still ferments
With fierce intestine factions, " ever known

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"To sheath, but not to lay the sword aside:"

I cannot bear it!—Now, the ball of power,

"Which has been bandy'd long from side to side:"

Is grasp'd by Cæsar; soon, superior force

May wrest it from his hand; who 'll then adhere

To Cæsar's cause? Will Herod?—He, be sure,

Would plan new measures to preserve the crown;

And his desertion, doubtless, would provoke

Cæsar to punish, in extreme revenge,

Th' offending father in the guiltless son.

Nar. The blood of Julius is aton'd; and Rome,

Like a tir'd lioness, which long has stood

The hunter's spear, lies quiet in her den

To heal her wounds: Cæsar himself aspires,

With all his conquests, only to be styl'd

His country's father; and the senate bears

The same pacific temper:—but, suppose

Another Brutus rouse another war,

And Tyber shine again with civil arms:

Though Herod then should draw the sword, and turn

The point on Cæsar; yet the sacred laws

Of empires, would preserve the prince's life

Inviolably safe.

Mari. "But, were revenge

"Employ'd (as sure it would) t' expound those Laws,

"Then, what bold casuist would appear, t' oppose

"The sence of Cæsar's legions?"

Inviolably safe!

No—Wrong and right

In this bad age are measur'd by success:

The blackest crime from fortune's golden light
 Receives a beauteous gloss. But grant him safe,
 As in the circle of his mother's arms :
 Rome may pervert his infant age to kneel
 Before her idol-shrines, and from our law
 Apostatize to worship fabled gods :
 And though I hold his life and safety dear,
 Far dearer than my own, I'd see him cast
 Amidst her amphitheatre a prey,
 " Mangled, and quiv'ring in the fanish'd jaws"
 Of savages, much rather than behold
 His body at her heathen altars bow'd,
 In impious adoration.

Nar. Leave th' event

To heaven's high care ! The king must be obey'd.
 If you contest the terms, to which his crown
 And honour stand engag'd, the vain attempt
 Might only serve to lessen that excess
 Of dear affection, which he bears you now ;
 Then Sohemus, our prime state engineer,
 Might see his arts succeed beyond his hope,
 T' achieve your fall, and make this beauteous pile
 A heap of mighty ruin !

Mari. Could you feel

The strong emotions of a mother's woe,
 When ravish'd from her lov'd one, who hath liv'd
 Most in her sight, and ever in her soul :
 Not all the wounds which fortune is impower'd
 T' inflict, nor instant death, would move your mind
 Amid his dangers to regard your own.

"Ev'n life, that dear ennobling gift of heaven,
 "Which in the order of creation, ranks
 "The palest glow-worm's animated ray,
 "Above the brightest star, with me will lose
 "Its boasted value, when I lose my child ;
 "With him I truly liv'd ; his presence crown'd
 "The day with pleasure, and the night with peace.
 "Then, breath consum'd in sighs will not deserve
 "The name of life ! These roofs shall only sound
 "With mournful accents, sad as murm'ring winds,
 "Which through the clefts of ruin'd cloisters roar.
 "Such music best will please the mother's ear,
 "If in a distant land, her tender son
 "Must weep the rigour of a foreign lord,
 "With no kind friend to pity or revenge
 "The wrong he there sustains !"

Ner. I'll wait the prince,
 To guard his helpless age, and share his fate :
 "And for a pledge of constant faith, receive
 "(Though much unequal, yet of dearest price
 "To him who gives it!) for a pledge receive
 "Those precious legacies which that bright saint,
 "My dying wife bequeath'd me !—If the prince
 "Shall feel the effects of violence or fraud ;"
 If e'er I cease with duteous care to shield
 From guilt his manners, from reproach his fame ;
 Or fail to banish from his pensive breast
 Each anxious thought, and cherish gentle joys ;
 Slay both my sons !

Mari. Then go, Arsinoe, go——
Hither conduct the prince.

[*Exit. Arsi.*

Oh, happiness!

Thou gaudy bubble, which delud'st the grasp;
Whene'er we strive to keep thee most secure.

"Have I been fond of Fortune's faithless smile,

"Cruel, disdainful, to deserve this doom?"

Did e'er I suffer pride to bar my ear

Against the widow's cry? Did e'er I view

The weeping orphan's anguish, and withhold

The hand of liberal mercy from their woes?

"Or did I, with uncharitable scorn,

"Ever upbraid the childless womb; or wish

"The wrathful blast of heaven t' attain the fruit

"Of my most deadly foe?"——Whence then to me

This undeserv'd distress? Why must I bear

So deep a wound in such a tender part?

More wretched than the meanest of my sex,

Who call me queen; they lose the cares of life,

Amid the blessings of a dear increase;

A bliss deny'd to me!

Nar. When foreign foes

Are quell'd by Cæsar, and the provinces

Avow their homage to the laws of Rome,

"And with consummate peace his arms are crown'd,"

The prince will be restor'd; and in exchange

Some of our noblest youth will be receiv'd

For hostages of friendship.

Mari. That exchange

Will come too late to bless my longing eyes:

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They 'll first be clos'd in death! a thousand ills
Rise in black view to my divining soul!

Enter ARSINOE with the Prince.

And must I lose thee!—Oh!—thou sweetest pledge
Of heaven's indulgence to a mother's prayer!
Must the sole comfort of my cares become
The cause of endless grief? "Alas, no more
"Must I with tender transport clasp thee thus!
"No more must these desiring eyes be fix'd
"In silent joy, with gazing on thy charms!"
Arsinoe, Oh, support me!—I've a son
To think on only, and to pay a tear
For every wounding thought! Oh, Narbal!—now
Obey the king, by whom the dearer names
Of husband, and of father are forgot!
Obey the king—let the rude hand of power
Tear from my breast the blossom of my joys—
Yet, let me bless him—All thy wants of me
May pitying angels with their aid supply;
Waft all thy prayers to heaven! which heaven approve,
And crown with blessings of eternal love. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS and NARBAL.

Flaminus.

UNHAPPY queen! till now I never griev'd
To obey my emperor.

Nar. A-while she stood
 Transform'd by grief to marble, and appear'd
 Her own pale monument: but, when she breath'd
 The secret anguish of her wounded soul,
 So moving were the plaints, they would have sooth'd
 The stooping falcon to suspend his flight,
 And spare his morning prey: "thus nature soon
 "Exhausted, spiritless, had need of art
 "To respite or assuage her troubled thoughts:
 "Then her physicians with the opiate charm
 "Of gentle sleep her fainting senses bound,
 "And hush'd the warring passions into peace."

Flam. Give me, ye gods! the harmony of war,
 The trumpet's clangour, and the clash of arms,
 That consort animates the glowing breast
 To rush on death: but, when our ear is pierc'd
 With the sad notes which mournful beauty yields:
 Our manhood melts with sympathizing tears.

Nar. Heavens! Is it just that Mariamne's fate
 Claims the sad tribute of a tender tear?
 She! she! whose gentle goodness strives to chase
 Afflictions from mankind. I've seen her weep,
 When the fierce hounds have bay'd the panting stag,
 Till the big drops roll'd from his pleading eyes;
 And none dar'd let the fatal javelin fly
 Before she left the field.

Enter ARSINOE with the Prince.

Arsi. To you, my lord, [To Nar.]
 The queen at length resigns this royal charge;

Judea's other hope! the dearest pledge
Of sacred faith that monarch can bestow.

Flam. Gods!—'tis not possible!—they've only
form'd

Those beauties in the same celestial mould—
Exact similitude of shape and air.

Nar. What may this mean, Flaminius?

Art. Do I wake?

Or does deluding fancy lead me still
In new fantastic labyrinths of bliss?

Flam. The face, and harmony of voice the same!

Nar. You're lost in admiration and surprize:
Reveal the cause.

Flam. Oh, sir!—I once was blest
With such a lovely object of my flame!
Beauty and goodness in her heavenly form
Held equal empire; Oh!

Nar. What cruel fate

"Sever'd your hearts, so tender, and so true,
"That still the wound bleeds fresh?"

Flam. The violence

Of civil discord snatch'd her from my arms:
But the last pang of death alone hath power
To tear the beauteous image from my breast!
She liv'd the grace of Cleopatra's court,
And shar'd her fall!—As her high merits claim'd
My earliest love, to her I pay my last:
My passion for the sex expir'd, and lies
In dear Hortensia's tomb!

[To *Nar.*

Arsi. Hortensia lives ! *[She runs into his arms.]*
Lives only for Flaminius—Lives to crown
Such matchless constancy !

Flam. Hath fate rejoin'd
Our long-divided hearts !——'T is she !——I know
[She shews a ring.]

“ That pledge of our espousals, where express'd,
“ The virgin phoenix riseth from the flames ;
“ Th' inscription was prophetic of thy fate,
“ Another and the same.”

Arsi. But ever thine !
Will not this joy, as all my former, fleet
Like the light vapour of a morning dream ?—

Flam. Rapt from myself, my senses are oppress'd
With rushing extasies : Oh, I could stand
And gaze for ever on thy heavenly charms,
In speechless transport, which too big for words
Swells in my heaving heart.

“ *Arsi.* How did you 'scape
“ Th' assassinates whom Antony employ'd
“ To take your head ?

“ *Flam.* My Phædria, by the crime
“ Of fortune born a slave (for sure his soul
“ Was of the noblest order) would assume
“ My habit and my name ; his features, age,
“ And stature well befriending the deceit ;
“ And thus disguis'd, his honest heart receiv'd
“ The wounds they meant for me.

“ *Arsi.* Oh, wondrous faith !”

Flam. But now, for Rome, Hortensia !——

Nar. Madam, pay

The queen a last farewell, in whom you found
The kindest mistress, and the best of friends.

Arsi. I will, my lord ; and——

Flam. Hark ! the trumpet speaks

The King's approach, our signal to depart :
I now must leave thee, to secure the prince,
As Cæsar gave command : but near the walls
My troops are tented in the western vale ;
Where meditating on my blissful change,
I'll watch impatient for the purple dawn ;
Thither you come ?

Arsi. Though grinning savages

Oppos'd my speed, I'd rush intrepid on.
From clime to clime, where-ever glory calls,
I'll wait my warrior ; pleas'd with thee to pass
The frozen Danube, or the sun-burnt Nile ;
And though my sex denies me to partake
The dangers of the field, with ardent vows
I'll beg each tutelary power, to spread
Protection round thee, in the cloud of war.
But if relentless to my prayer they prove,
And thou art fated in the fight to fall,
I'll follow fast the soul of my desire,
And by the wound, that pierc'd my lord, expire.
[*Exeunt, Arsinoe on one side of the Stage, the rest on
the other.*]

Enter SALOME and SOHEMUS.

Sal. In the high mantling tide of grief and rage,

D

Sure when the king arrives, her cold disdain
Will damp the glowing ardour of his soul.

Sobe. Fear not a calm ! The cloud will now collect
More vapours still, to give a nobler burst,
And make her ruin sure. When vulgar minds
Despond, they drop beneath the stroke of fate,
With no more tumult than autumnal leaves
Forsake the sapless bough : but, majesty
With noise, and pompous horror rushes down ;
As if the violence of nature tore
A planet from its orb.

Enter PHERORAS.

“ *Pher.* The pomp of kings
“ At their triumphal entries, moving slow
“ To warlike symphonies, and clashing arms :
“ When from the field, with bloody laurels crown'd,
“ They come victorious, gives a mingled joy :
“ For pity, when the captive train appears,
“ Oft with a silent pensive gloom obscures
“ The lustre of the triumph. But no cloud
“ Saddens this festival : from the white tower,”
I heard with rapture how the loyal tribes,
In mighty confluence hail'd the king's return ;
“ So long ! so loud ! that floating on the sound,
“ The bird of heaviest wings with ease had soar'd,
“ Beyond the towering eagle's utmost flight,
“ Up-born by gales of joy.” *[A flourish.]*
Sobe. My lord, the king !——

*[Herod passeth over the stage with attendants, &c.
they all kneel.]*

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Pher. Oh, king, for ever live! the dear defence,
And grace of Palestine.

Sal. May this blest day
Tincture with happiness, and bright renown,
All your succeeding years!

Sobe. And sure there's none,
To whom this day can give sincerer joy,
Than to your faithful Sohemus; who kneels
To give this seal of delegated power
Back to your royal hand

Herod. Let all who sigh
In gloomy dungeons, press'd with galling chains,
Shake off their bondage, and conspire to tune
The wholesome breath of heaven to songs of praise.
Tell them they owe their freedom to the queen:
Her temper is compassionate and kind,
As guardian angels are: but I! constrain'd
By the sad exigence of state, have torn
Our tender offspring from her fond embrace;
And heap'd afflictions on the brightest head,
That ever wore a crown!

Pher. But your approach
Will sooth her grief, and soften the surprize.

Herod. I! I am the sole cause of all her grief!
Ambition rushing forwards, hath disturb'd
My sweetest fountain of domestic bliss!
"It promis'd sceptres, but hath fill'd my grasp
"With gilded thorns!" wanting my queen, the court
Appears as lonesome as the dreary waste,
Where pestilence and famine, hand in hand,

Have lately reign'd : but, Mariamne's smiles
 Diffusive of their good, around her cast
 On all the shining circle beams of joy ;
 When from the wars she welcom'd my return,
 With tears of tender transport in her eyes.
 Such oft our meetings were ; but, dismal change !
 'The fair offended seems to shun me now :
 How shall I calm the tempest of her soul ! [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

Opening, discovers MARIAMNE asleep, and ARSINOE attending—HEROD enters, and goes to the Queen; then comes with ARSINOE to the fore part of the Stage.

Herod. I kiss'd her softly, and she gave a sigh !
 Tears make her cheek feel like a damask rose,
 Wet with cold evening dew.

Arsi. Sleep ill performs
 His gentle office when constrain'd by art :
 Her sudden starts, and broken murmurs shew
 The discomposure of displeasing dreams.

Herod. Music shall wake her : that hath power to
 charm

Pale sickness, and avert the stings of pain :
 " But, ever on the mind the sure effects
 " Are most conspicuous where the varied notes
 " Can raise or quell our passions, and becalm
 " In sweet oblivion the too wakeful sense
 " Of grief, or love ; and print a dimpled smile

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"On the green, bloodless cheek of dumb despair."
Such powerful strains bid harmony resound:
Such as good spirits are supposed to sing
O'er saints, while death dissolves the union-band,
"And frees them from the fretful dream of life."

[Exit Arsinoe.]

Here will I watch the day-break of her eyes:
O! may they dart warm rays of cordial love,
And wake to peace and joy!

[Soft music is heard behind the scenes; Arsinoe returns to Herod, who stands looking on Mariamne: after the music is ceased, she begins to speak.]

Mari. Good angels guard me!—

Murder attaints not me—

Herod. Ah, gentle soul!—

Mari. The man of blood is justly doom'd to bleed:
I ne'er shed any—"When I was a child

"I kill'd a linnet, but indeed I wept:

"Heaven visits not for that."—O! 't is my lord!

He's poison'd! dead! dead! and each manly grace

Cover'd with purple spots!

Herod. These frightful dreams

"With their fantastic imag'ry amaze

"The mind, as much as the most hideous form

"Of real horror."

Arsi. Sir, she wakes.

Mari. The king.

Herod. My dearest queen!—The fairest and the
best

That ever bore the name!

Mari. I'm chang'd of late,
Alas! much chang'd——

[*Exit Arsinoe.*

Herod. No, thou art still the same;
The same bright shrine where virtue dwells, to charm
Those who condemn her most.

Mari. Could I have charm'd
Ambition from your breast, I had not mourn'd
The dearest object of maternal love,
Torn from this bleeding heart; where he possess'd
So large a space, that Fortune is too poor
With all her vast variety of joys,
To fill the gloomy void!—My life is spun
At least this day too long, which shews you chang'd,
And from a loving lord grown most unkind!

Herod. Unkind!—Your fancy cannot form a wish,
But I should crown it; and reproach my heart,
For having not prevented your request:
Was ever soul so sensible of love,
As mine hath been for you! and who but you
Could e'er deserve such love? I never err'd:
Witness, ye heavens! and with your thunder rend
This heart, if e'er it err'd! if e'er I stain'd
The purity of passion, or in thought
Wander'd from Mariamne.

Mari. In your breast
I could have spar'd your son a little space
But sure you lov'd him not.

Herod. What! am I form'd
Like monumental marbles, “and receive
“The name of father from the sculptor's art,

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"And features of the rock?" Am I so dead
To the sweet cares that fathers ought to feel?
An old man's rapture when he first beholds
A new-born heir, when years of fruitless hope
Have led him childless to the verge of life,
Cannot surpass those dear paternal joys,
Which my fond bosom from my son receiv'd.

Mari. Yet you resign'd him for a prey to Rome,
With less reluctance!——

Herod. Cæsar would allow

Of no alternate to preserve our crown.

Suppliant I long intreated him, to name

What other test of sacred faith he pleas'd:

But frowning with a victor's haughty air,

He pointed to a picture on the wall;

"Whose silent eloquence too plainly spoke

"His fix'd resolve against the suit I urg'd."

Mari. What picture?

Herod. Perseus led in chains through Rome:

Where the sad fate of Macedon appear'd

Prophetic of our own, "should we like her

"Boast a false vigour, and provoke the rage

"Of Rome, unequal to sustain her arms."

There fancy figur'd to my mournful eyes,

The wealth of Palestine in chargers pil'd:

Our shields and spears on moving trophies hung,

Ingloriously revers'd; and then succeed

Nobles and matrons, with a virgin train,

In long procession thro' th' un pitying crowd:

But oh! what stings of grief and horror pierc'd

My agonizing heart, when there I view'd
 A royal captive, far transcending all
 In matchless beauty and majesty woe.
 Her form resembling thine ! On her a throng
 Of gay Patricians fix'd their wond'ring eyes,
 Enamour'd ! and with rival passion strove,
 Who first should prostrate to his brutal joys
 Her unpolled charms. Thy future doom
 Thus pictur'd to my view, so wrapt my soul
 In clouds of deep despair, I strait comply'd
 To give the filial pledge.

Mari. Just heaven, exact
 With strict account from Caesar's rigid heart,
 A pang, for every pang that tortures mine !
 " May public discord and domestic jars
 " Make his short rain a stormy winter's day !
 " And may his children with dishonest shame
 " Redden his hoary cheek ; and wound his soul !
 " With keener anguish than their mother bore
 " Amid her fiercest throes ! "

Her. Leave him to enjoy
 The destiny allotted, and restrain
 Your passionate complaints, which but foment
 A grief much greater than the cause requires.

Mari. Your strange insensibility foment
 My wonder more—what grief's more rational,
 Or what can equal mine, whose darling hope
 Is ravish'd in the tender dawn of life
 By savages ? " A miscreant haughty race "
 " Who with hereditary hate pursue

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Mari.
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"The name of monarch;" and from us dissent
In manners, habit, speech, religion, laws.
There my poor infant, like a beauteous flower
Transplanted to a cold unfriendly soil,
Must droop neglected! "What protecting hand
Will there with tender delicacy guard
His opening bloom? Ah, none!—He there must
live

"A friendless exile;" he! whose menial train
Nobles were proud to grace, "and all conspir'd
To make his hours in downy circles dance,
And sooth his soul to joy," must now indure—
Alas! what not endure!

Herod. The Roman name

Is far renown'd for all the softer arts
Which polish life, "and with ennobling grace
Illustrate virtue. Would you but attend,
The voice of reason dictates to our choice,
The deed which strong necessity constrains."
What court but that of Rome could form his mind
By surest maxims, ere he mounts the throne,"
To guide the reins of empire?—"Thus of old,
Philip from his dejected realm was sent,
A tender hostage to the Theban state:
Where founding his high virtue on the plan
Of great Epaminondas, he reveng'd
The wrongs of Macedon, and soon reduc'd
More than a hundred potentates."

Mari. The deeds

Of my heroic ancestors might fire

My son, t' ascend the laurel'd heights of fame,
 Without a Roman guide. If he pursue
 With equal steps the glorious paths they trod;
 Like them he 'll awe the nations round, and reign
 Honour'd in peace, and terrible in war,
 Where he of growth in radiant steel to lead
 The files of war against his country's foe;
 No soft emasculating tear should stain
 The lustre of his arms: I'd gird the sword
 On the young warrior's thigh, and send him forth,
 Resolv'd to conquer in so just a cause,
 Or dauntless in her dear defence to fall.

Herod. Why then regret you with this rage of grief,
 The happier triumphs of auspicious peace
 Which he bestows? "For none but he had power
 "T' avert the furies of invasive war:
 "For that sole pledge, Judea smiles to see
 "Soft quiet spreading wide her turtle wings
 "O'er all her bounds;" and him we both must own
 The guardian of our crown.

Mari. The crown is bought
 Far, far too dear, with such a precious bribe!
 "Preserv'd by mean submission to the frown
 "Of alien states, what's he who wears it more
 "Than a vain idol of imperial power,
 "Which moves subservient to the master hand;
 "No freedom left to will?" Had Cæsar urg'd
 This haughty mandate, when the realm obey'd
 The founders of my Asmonæan race,
 They would have plum'd his eagles on the field!

Herod.

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Call'd you

Herod. I

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Herod. I neither envy, nor defame the dead ;
Peace to their honour'd shades ! Nor should you praise
Their actions, only in reproach to mine ;
That's too severe——When they the sceptre sway'd,
Rome had not stretch'd the terror of her arms,
“ From far Euphrates and the conquer'd east,
“ To Lusitania and th' Atlantic main.”

If they reign'd now, their prudence would inspire
The same pacific councils I pursue ;

“ Since her vast power makes all resistance vain :

“ Vain as the fury which a wintry storm

“ Dischargeth on the sea, whose waves enjoy

“ Th' impetuous ruin of the rushing clouds,

“ And swell with prouder state.”——Alas ! thy
breast

Still heaves with sighs ! Forbear !——My heart repays
Each tear with drops of blood !——“ Provoke not
heaven

“ By violating with superfluous grief,

“ The brightest image of itself, imprest

“ On thy resembling graces.”

Mari. Though my tears

Equall'd the dew drops of the weeping morn,

My fate requires them all !——His infant charms

Sweetly supply'd your absence, and beguil'd

My widow'd hours, whene'er the voice of war

Call'd you to distant camps !——

Herod. If ev'ry star

Contain'd a golden world, and bounteous heaven

Would make me lord of all, I 'd not forsake

My Mariamne, to receive the boon,
 My absence never shall afflict thee more.
 The blaze of glory, whose deluding light
 Misled me from thy arms, shall now be lost,
 In love's superior flame; " Pheroras, train'd
 " In Roman camps, and perfected in arms,
 " Shall have the conduct of our future wars."
 And now, thou dearest treasure of my soul!
 Prepare with every smiling grace t' adorn
 The Festival; " and let victorious joy
 " Chase every black idea from thy mind:"
 For ever banish from thy gentle breast
 All cares, except the pleasing cares of love
 Be this the prelude of eternal peace,
 And mutual passion with our years increase! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Enter SOHEMUS and SALOME.

Sohemus.

RESTRAIN this flood of unavailing tears!
 For if they flow for pity or remorse,
 They flow in vain. " In distant ages past
 " Pity dy'd young; of grief, they say, to see
 " An eagle wreak his malice on a wren.
 " If she were yet on earth, where could she find
 " A nobler palace than a brother's breast?
 " But there you found her not; the more's the shame!

" Since pity 's fled to heaven, we 'll send remorse

" To howl in hell : it has no business here !——

" But if these tears flow from the nobler source

" Of indignation, and the generous shame

" Of injur'd merit ;" if they relish strong

The bitterness of soul from which they stream ;

Oh, let increasing fury swell the tide,

Ev'n whilst we put in act our great revenge !

" So weeps the storm, while the devouring waves

" Close o'er the wrecks it made."

Sal. Had I not seen

His cheek discolour'd, when his passion foam'd,

And heard him thunder threats of instant death

To me, and all whose generous spirits scorn

To bear th' oppression of his haughty queen ;

I never had believ'd myself so lost

To his affection.

Sobe. Lost ! he lov'd you not ;

Ambition is the mistress of his soul :

" The queen herself holds but the second place."

To please that mistress he condemn'd to die

All the wife's kindred ; now, to please the wife,

His own must bleed : " greatness hath made him deaf

" To nature's voice, ev'n while she pleads for you.

" *Sal.* The wretch who in an earthquake sees the
ground

" Heave like a swelling wave before it gapes

" To sink him to the centre, stands as safe,

" As I so near the tyrant !

" *Sobe.* In his court

" On these sad terms, at best you but enjoy
 " A prison of state. When rival princes laid
 " Their scepters at your feet, the queen prevail'd
 " To have each honourable suit refus'd."

Sal. Revenge no more shall grovel in the dark,
 But fan with dragon-wings the face of day;
 Oppose her course who can! It is resolv'd—

Sohe. Once Mariamne was the destin'd prey;
 But since her charms enthrall the king as fast,
 As in the freshness of her bridal love,
 They both shall die.

Sal. Yes, both; and all their friends
 " At once descending crowd the gates of night;"
 For self defence will sanctify the deed—
 And Fame, th' officious herald of success,
 Will blazon our renown;—and though we fail,
 'T is great to dare.

Sohe. " When those proud cedars fall,
 " Their spreading ruin will destroy the shrubs
 " Which flourish in their shade."—And lo, the man!
 Whom fate selects t' achieve her high decree.

Enter SAMEAS.

Sal. This diamond, Sameas, but prepares the way
 For future favours. [Gives him a jewel.]

Sameas. Your auspicious smiles,
 Madam, o'er-pay my service.

Sohe. Sameas, wait
 A while in my apartment, and I come

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Sohe.

T'instruct you further to deserve her grace.

[Exit Sameas.

Sal. The diamond which I gave him is the queen's ;
Arsinoe lent it, for the jeweller
To model one for me.

Sobe. It sure will prove
Of dearest value now ; I was amaz'd
To see you give an earnest of such price,
To one whose genuine malice renders vice
Its own reward, and kills for killing sake.

Sal. The wretch is avaricious ; we must feed
The appetite of wealth, which urg'd him first
To trade in death.

" *Sobe.* How urg'd ?

" *Sal.* Along the shore

" He walk'd one evening, when the clamorous rage

" Of tempests wreck'd a ship : the crew were sunk,

" The master only reach'd the neighb'ring strand,

" Borne by a floating fragment : but, so weak

" With combating the storm, his tongue had lost

" The faculty of speech, and yet for aid

" He faintly wav'd his hand, on which he wore

" A fatal jewel. Sameas, quickly charm'd

" Both by its size and lustre, with a look

" Of pity, stoop'd to take him by the hand ;

" Then cut the finger off to gain the ring,

" And plung'd him back to perish in the waves ;

" Crying, go dive for more.—I've heard him boast

" Of this adventure."

Sobe. He 's a very fiend !

E ij

If we succeed, he shall not live an hour,
In mercy to ourselves : his poisoning art
In time would taint the vital breath of spring ;
And spread contagion with each spicy gale——

But see the queen, let us retire. [A Messenger enters,

" *Mess.* Lord Hazeroth releas'd, demands to see

" Your lordship—— [Exit,

" *Sobe.* Me !

" *Sal.* Receive him ; I'll retire.

" *Enter HAZEROTH and SOHEMUS.*

" *Haz.* The king, I thank his grace ! vouchsafes
me leave

" To breathe a freer air, than what was judg'd

" Fit for my constitution ; though the terms

" Of freedom are severe.

" *Sobe.* What terms, my lord ?

" *Haz.* To sue for reconciliation, and receive

" In sacred friendship that injurious hand,

" Which coop'd me, like a starling in a cage :

" You know the man !

" *Sobe.* My lord, the man you mean

" Bears such devotion to your high descent,

" That 't is the favourite passion of his soul,

" To live your humblest servant.

" *Haz.* And his tongue

" Distills court-honey, while his heart o'erflows

" With quintessence of gall.

" *Sobe.* That character,

" My lord, with great submission I disown,

" You hear the dictates of an honest heart,

" That 's warm in all your interests.

" *Haz.* You confin'd

" My person, like a felon's, to promote

" My int'rest : statesmen have peculiar arts ;

" They 're so mysterious, few can apprehend

" The favours they confer.

" *Sobe.* The crime deserv'd

" Severer penance than the king enjoin'd.

" *Haz.* I thank your majesty.

" *Sobe.* I then, my lord,

" Bore th' express image of the sov'reign power ;

" And that 's allow'd to dignify the coin,

" However mean the metal. Me you brav'd,

" With most unseemly licence ; but th' affront

" Wounded the king ; and his prerogative

" Reveng'd itself, not me.

" *Haz.* Whene'er the spleen,

" And pride of tools in office are chastis'd ;

" The king 's affronted !—'T is the general cry,

" From those who lord it in the Sanhedrim,

" To him who drives the camels.

" *Sobe.* When, my lord,

" Your shining merits meet their just reward ;

" Distinguish'd with some honourable post,

" As soon they must ; you 'il own my doctrine sound.

" Nothing but duty to preserve the crown

" In its full lustre, 'till the king return'd,

" Could urge me to exert an act of power
 " On you, my lord, whose qualities adorn
 " Your royal lineage —but, the noblest fruits
 " Have too much tartness, 'till the mellowing year
 " Digest their eager juices.
 " *Haz.* Youth is apt
 " T' incur such indiscretions, as the king
 " Forgave in me, and you, my lord, forget:
 " Our friendship here begins.
 " *Sohe.* May death alone
 " Dissolve the honour'd tie! [*Exit Haz.*] Oh, flattery!
 " How soon thy smooth insinuating oil
 " Supples the toughest fool. [*Exit Sohe.*]

Enter MARIAMNE and ARSINOE.

Mari. With less regret
 I can support your absence, since my son
 Will find so kind a guardian, to discharge
 The dear engagements that a mother owes:
 We differ but in name.

Arsi. The prince shall be
 The tender object of my hourly care;
 Happy, that fate reserves it in my power,
 T' express the sense my grateful heart retains
 Of royal favour.

Mari. Nature form'd our sex
 For soft endearing offices! " she starts,
 " When pity is depos'd, and cruel pride
 " Usurps the vacant throne. Alas! you see
 " How deep the darts of fortune wound the great,

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"Though clad in golden armour." Were you sway'd
By favours in reversion, "which allure
"Ev'n vulgar souls to succour the distress'd ;"
Int'rest would tell you, that your darling son
May want a friend ; and then, my tender plant,
In the full verdure of his royal growth,
May recompence your kind protecting care,
And shield him from a storm.—Is the time fix'd
For your departure ?

Arti. Sohemus intends

To obtain the royal mandate, to delay
My journey with my lord : then all my joys,
Like the false colours of the show'ry bow,
Will fade in tears.

Mari. The politician's art

Must so revenge his disappointed passion ;
"His spider constitution would dissolve
"In its own venom, if he should forbear
"To spin it off in crafty dark intrigues,
"Pernicious to my peace, and those I love."
Before the banquet you shall quit the court ;
Then let Flaminius vindicate his claim.
"And by this prompt compliance with your lord,
"Form all your future conduct ; and effect
"The power to please, and not to give him pain :
"For, wedded love is founded on esteem,
"Which the fair merits of the mind engage :
"For those are charms that never can decay :
"But time, which gives new whiteness to the swan,
"Improves their lustre.

“ *Arsi.* None of human race
 “ Would live more happy, could we but transcribe
 “ The bright example of a royal pair :
 “ If my Flaminius ever would reward
 “ My constant ardor, with an equal flame ;
 “ Engag’d by such endearing decencies
 “ As make the lamp of love in Herod’s breast
 “ To burn so bright as never to consume.

“ *Mari.* Beware of flatt’ry ! ’t is a flow’ry weed,
 “ Which oft offends the very idol vice,
 “ Whose shrine it would perfume.

“ *Arsi.* But rigid truth
 “ Turns praise to incense, which the nicest sense
 “ Of virtue may receive——In your soft chains
 “ Your captive lord is led from joy to joy :
 “ Days, months, and years, in circling raptures roll,
 “ And each advancing hour outshines the past.
 “ None, none but he can such a treasure boast,
 “ Rich in perfections, able to suffice
 “ His avarice of love.

“ *Mari.* When hearts are join’d
 “ In virtuous union, love’s impartial beams
 “ Gild the low cottage of the faithful swain
 “ With equal warmth, as when he darts his fires
 “ On canopies of state.”

Arsi. The danger’s fled,
 And now I may disclose a stronger proof
 Of Herod’s passion, than the long records
 Of love contain.

Mari.

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Arsi.

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Mari. What proof!—a dangerous proof
Conceal'd from me!

Arsi. When Cæsar's mounted beams
Prevail'd o'er Antony's inferior star,
He thought the victor, in severe revenge,
Would take both life and crown; his life and crown
Were toys beneath his care; but, Oh! what pangs
He felt, reflecting that your death alone
Could save your beauties to himself entire!
How vast a passion his, who could not bear
A rival in the grave!

Mari. How! Did the king
To the red hand of slaughter doom the breast
Of once-lov'd Mariamne?—"Gave command
"This breast should bleed, where never dwelt a
thought

"Disloyal or unkind!"—Had other lips
Breath'd forth this fatal truth, it would appear
The dictate of inventive spleen, disclos'd
To violate my peace: but you're sincere;
And knowing that, I know myself undone!

Arsi. Oh, that I had been born like nature's mutes,
That swim the silent deep!—Believe me false;
Or else, with me, believe the king's decree
A test of wondrous love, and dear esteem!

Mari. Love, and esteem!

Arsi. Alas! rekindling rage
Glow's on your cheek, and sparkles in your eyes:
Think me perfidious, or distrust the power,
And evidence of ev'ry faithful sense;

Rather than doubt yourself the worship'd shrine
Of his fond soul, and treasure of his joys.

Mari. To dissipate my doubt, recite the whole,
Without evasions.

Arsi. When he went to Rhodes,
He thus to Sohemus his charge address'd :
If I to Cæsar's rage a victim fall,
Let not my beauteous queen survive, to grace
The victor's triumph, or to crown his love :
Let me lie envy'd in the grave, possess'd
Of Mariamne there ! a happier doom,
Than 'tis to live the world's imperial lord
Without my queen, or rival'd in my love.

Mari. Whene'er did cruelty assume a look
So smooth and fair before ?—To summon death,
And arm the terror with a dart of love
Against his queen ! his wife ! whose ardent vows,
Incessant prayer, and sacrifice, implor'd
Th' unutterable name, to make his head
White as the flowing almond, with increase
Of prosp'rous days, that ages yet unborn
Might bow before his throne, and bless his power,
When I lie unlamented and forgot,
A little heap of dust : and this return !
A sad return indeed !

Arsi. Cail it despair,
And fear of losing what his soul adores.
Our deeds receive their colours from the will ;
His tongue was cruel, but his heart was kind ;
“ And rigor was, at worst, the sudden child

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"Of grief, and bore a fix'd, but melting eye ;
"Or if a crime, the crime of boundless love."

Mari. Good heaven ! that base, perfidious creature,
man !

With what dissembled agonies of grief
He cried, farewell ! and fainted in my arms :
I, credulously fond, thought all sincere.

Arsi. His grief was undissembled ; but your charms
Have wrought his love to rage.

Mari. If this poor stock
Of artless beauty hath such fatal power,
When you, Arsinoe, have a daughter born,
Beg all deformities of shape and face,
T'insure her quiet from that monster, man ;
"Who, quitting reason, a celestial claim,
"To the sweet harmony of souls prefers
"A little white and red, the airy food
"Of bestial appetite ; and for a cheek,
"Whose transient beauties hardly will outwear
"The wardrobe of a flower." [A messenger enters.

Mess. The king and court
Intreat your majesty would come, to grace
The banquet.

Mari. No ; I'm indispos'd. [*Exit Mess.*]—Now, fly,
Arsinoe, fly the meditated snare
Which Sohemus will spread ; and may your love
In the warm smile of fortune flourish fair,
Fruitful of virtuous joys ; but if the power
Blast with malignant frowns the blooming sweets,
Absolve your destiny of partial rage ;

Think on the wife, the mother, and the queen,
Whose heart her hostile troops have long besieg'd;
Think with kind pity on the countless store
Of Mariamne's woes, and weep no more. [Exit,

Enter SALOME.

"*Sal.* I thought my heart was arm'd with adamant
Against remorse; but nature fools me now,
A faint cold shiv'ring seizeth every limb.

Enter SOHEMUS.

"My lord, Oh, breathe some cordial to revive
My sick'ning expectation!
"*Sohe.* To defeat
Our purpose, fortune, with malicious joy,
Fav'ring the queen, hath snatch'd her from the
stroke
Of lifted thunder; but the bolt is hurl'd,
And on her head the ruin shall rebound.
Her stern refusal to partake the feast,
In foul suspicion will confirm the king,
Absolve us, and to her transfer the crime.
With hope attend th' event. [Exit Sohe."

Sal. On this great hour
Shine all ye planets, whose malignant rays
Blast the fair prosp'rous growth of regal power;
Hark!—Death's in action; from the banquet sounds
The music of his triumphs, groans and cries!

Enter PHERORAS.

Pher. Give me, good heaven! to feed on whole-
some herbs

In camps, and drink the pure untainted spring;
Since death in ambush lies in sparkling cups,
And courtly viands.

Sal. Why, my lord, so pale?
What strange disorder ends the festival?

Pher. Sameas, the wretch whom I preferr'd to court,
Design'd to poison all.

Sal. Avert it, Heav'ns!
I hope he fail'd.

Pher. His felon-cheek ne'er chang'd
Its colour, when he brought th' impoison'd bowl,
With garlands crown'd, and gave it to the king,
Who, with the fondness of a lover, cry'd
He'd not indulge his taste, because the queen
Refus'd t' adorn the circle; so resign'd
To Hazeroth the pledge of royal grace.
Sudden his lips grew livid, and discharg'd
A purple foam, his labouring bosom swell'd,
His eye-balls like malignant meteors glar'd,
Unmov'd and ghastly; as the venom spread,
Frightful convulsions writh'd his tortur'd limbs,
Then mad with anguish, rushing to the floor,
He groan'd his soul away.

Sal. All 'scap'd but he?

Pher. Had not the villain over-drugg'd the wine,
We all had perish'd.

Enter HEROD and SOHEMUS, meeting.

Herod. Will the queen obey
Our order, and attend us?

Sohe. Sir, she comes
With much reluctance.

Enter MARIAMNE.

Herod. [*To Mar.*] Did the banquet want
Variety, or elegance of art,
T'engage you to partake? If all our court
Had been alike abstemious, Death had miss'd
A rich repast.

Mari. Death! I can bear the sound:
Ill fate is grown familiar to my ear.

Herod. There let it meet your eye.

[*She goes to the door which he points to.*]

O'er the black crime
How white a veil of innocence she throws!

Sohe. Her eyes glance indignation, now she finds
Th' envenom'd dart hath err'd.

Mari. Poor Hazeroth,
Thy freedom cost thee dear!

Herod. You have been just,
In punishing the traitor's insolence,
Whom in excess of clemency I spar'd
Because ally'd to you.

Mari. Murder'd by me!——
So let the tiger sheath his savage fangs,
And for the mangled fawn implead the roe!

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Sohe. ?

Herod.

To build my frame the forming power infus'd
 Too mild a spirit in too soft a mold,
 For such barbarian deeds—Who wears the sword,
 That, “flesh’d in slaughter,” levell’d to the dust
 The royal stem whence that poor scion sprung?

[*Pointing towards Haz.*

“Who doom’d to death the hoary majesty
 “Of good Hyrcanus?” Whose insatiate rage
 Murder’d my royal father, and his son?
 Bid fame to late posterity report
 That Mariamne did it—She destroy’d
 Her grandsire, father, uncle, brother, all
 Her Asmonæan race, and then constrain’d
 Herod to wear a crown.

Herod. So grac’d, to fall
 A nobler victim to her last revenge!

Mari. Call your brib’d witnesses; they’re useful paint
 To varnish acts of arbitrary rage.

Herod. Why comes not Sameas? [Exit Sohe.

Oh, how bless’d am I,
 If Heaven preserves that angel form the seat
 Of innocence and truth! but much I fear
 Too plain conviction; for thy dream reveal’d
 This meditated crime: I heard thee cry,
 The king is poison’d—But attend the proof.

Re-enter SOHEMUS with SAMEAS.

Sohe. The diamond will confirm your evidence.

[*Aside.*

Herod. Sameas, beware, and tremble to transgress

The bounds of truth. If one assertion fail
Of utmost evidence against the queen,
Thou for a single fiction shalt descend
Quick to the heart of hell. Who gave the drugs
That poison'd Hazeroth?

Sameas. Arsinoe said

She brought them from the queen, and much extoll'd
Their powerful virtue to revive the flames
Of dying love.

Mari. Heaven guard my innocence!

Herod. Haste, call Arsinoe——

Sobe. Sir, she fled the court
In great disorder.

Herod. "How!" *Fled!*

Sobe. The Roman camp
Protects her guilt.

Herod. A potion to revive
The flames of love! Did e'er my passion need
The wicked power of art to make it glow? [*To Mari.*
"O'erwhelm'd with black confusion!"

Mari. Must a dream,
The transient image of a troubled thought,
Join'd with that villain's frontless perjury,
Be clear, consummate proof t' affirm a fact
Would make fiends start, and stand in wild amaze,
"Abstracted from their hate?" Can he produce
A promise of rewards, or present bribe
To fortify this proof?

Sameas. Arsinoe gave
This precious token of your future grace.

[*Shows a jewel.*

Herod.

Mari.

You gave

Herod.

The lure

Mari.

Send, int

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Herod.

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"Seize I

Mari.

His order

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Herod.

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Mari.

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Guard my

Herod. Know you this diamond, sorceress?

Mari. 'T is the same

You gave me on your birth-day.

Herod. To be made

The lure of death—Oh, foul!

Mari. Arsinoe's false—

Send, intercept her flight: let her confront

His evidence; and if they both conspire

T'attaint my innocence—

Herod. My guards!—Secure

[*To the Capt. of the Guard.*

That wicked woman with a double guard—

“Seize her, I say!” *Hence! hence!*

Mari. Friend, tremble not t'obey

His orders; thou'rt a soldier—But, my lord,

Think not these tears, the frailty of my sex,

Argue a sense of guilt, or servile hope

Of moving pity, to retard my doom;

I weep not for myself, nor wish to ward

The blow, whene'er misguided justice strikes:

But if I e'er was treasur'd in your heart;

For sure you lov'd me once—

Herod. And lov'd too well.

May all who hate me love as much as I,

And then be thus requited!

Mari. “When I'm dead,

“Oh, let the stream of dear affection flow

“Redoubled on my son! to him transfer

“The share I've lost.”

Guard my son; and never may the wrong

F ij

His mother bears, obstruct the sweet returns
Of filial duty, and paternal love !
But may my memory his soul inspire
To scorn inglorious life, when honour calls
Greatly to act, or suffer in her cause :
And think the debt which death is sure to claim,
A tribute due to virtue and to fame.

Herod. *Ob, Mariamne ! with my setting sun,
Ill fortune now projects a deeper shade :
Would I, alas ! were number'd with the dead.* [Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter HEROD and PHERORAS.

Pheroras.

THE silent night hath pass'd her sable noon ;
In mercy to your realm, regard your health,
Compose yourself to sleep.

Herod. Bid the wretch sleep,
Whose limbs, extended on the rack, endure
The utmost stretch of pain—I suffer more !
More, my Pheroras, more !—The balm of sleep
Can ne'er refresh these eyes, till the pale hand
Of Death shall draw their curtains, and exclude
The busy buzzing swarm of stinging thoughts.
My bed, the scene of all my blissful hours,
Of all my tender, chaste, endearing joys,
Which now have wing'd their everlasting flight,

Is grown the den of horror and despair.

"Oh, Mariamne! with my setting sun,

"Ill-fortune now projects a deeper shade:

"I wish I were as I had never been

"Number'd among the dead!"

Pher. Let the foul crime

Erase the faithful characters, which love

Imprinted on your heart.

"*Herod.* Alas! the pain

"We feel, whene'er we dispossess the soul

"Of that tormenting tyrant, far exceeds

"The rigour of his rule.

"*Pher.* With reason quell

"That haughty passion; treat it as your slave;"

Resume the monarch.

Herod. Where's the monarch now?—

The vulgar call us gods, and fondly think

That kings are cast in more than mortal molds:

Alas! they little know that when the mind

Is cloy'd with pomp, our taste is pall'd to joy;

But grows more sensible of grief or pain.

"The stupid peasant with as quick a sense,

"Enjoys the fragrance of a rose, as I;

"And his rough hand is proof against the thorn,

"Which rankling in my tender skin, would seem

"A viper's tooth." O, blissful poverty!

Nature, too partial, to thy lot assigns

Health, freedom, innocence, and downy peace,

Her real goods: and only mocks the great

With empty pageantries! Had I been born

A cottager, my homely bowl had flow'd
Secure from pois'nous drugs; but now my wife!—
Let me, good Heaven, forget that guilty name,
Or madness will ensue.——Oh, hence! [*Exit. Pher.*]

Enter HIGH-PRIEST.

At this late hour,
When only discontented spectres roam
In moon-light walks; or yet more anxious men,
With pangs of agonizing passion torn,
Accuse their stars; and with their sorrows make
The midnight echoes mourn; at this late hour,
What discords break the virtuous harmony
Which wont to reign within thy pious breast?

High-Pr. O, that, my royal lord, that which will
spread

O'er Palestine the blackest veil of woe,
That ever nation wore! Forgive my zeal,
Which breaks through courtly forms, to execute
The heavenly office which my order claims.
Peace is my province; and I prostrate beg,
By all your public and domestic joys!
By the dear offspring of your royal bed!
By all that merits your regard, release
Your injur'd queen!

Herod. Have you not heard her crime?
Shall I resume a sorceress to my breast,
Who unprovok'd, with black infernal hate
Attempted our perdition? No!

High-Pr. My liege!

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Herod.

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High-P

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Her gentle goodness ne'er could break the band
Of nature, and the stronger ties of love——

Herod. Thirst for her husband's blood!——A
lioness

Is kinder to her mate.

Highb-Pr. It cannot be :
Some wretch hath sold his mercenary soul,
T' accuse her without cause.

Herod. Is all our court
Combin'd in perjury ? They all condemn
Her execrable deed.

Highb-Pr. Their tongues are tun'd
To what they think delights the royal ear :
“ In this confusion, should a comet rise,
“ They'd cry, the queen hath set the world o'fire !”
Vouchsafe her audience, Sir ; hear her defence
With cool impartial reason ; error oft
Assumes the shape of truth, “ and the wild eye
“ Of passion rarely can at first discern
“ Th'imposture in disguise.” Let not your heart,
Where late her beauteous image was inshrin'd,
Be now immur'd with marble from her prayer !
Offended Heaven with pitying ear accepts
The sighs of penitents, and freelier grants
Access when soonest sought.

Herod. Did she request
Admittance to me ?

Highb-Pr. Yes ; with such an air
Of grief ennobled with majestic grace,
With such undaunted fortitude of mind,

Soft'ned with pensive sweetness in her eyes,
 That speaks her wrong'd; none but a soul as white
 As new-born innocence, could shine so clear
 On the dim verge of death.—My gracious lord,
 Forgive the frailties of forgetful age!
 She took this ruby bracelet from her arm,
 Which on this anniverse she wont to wear
 In sweet remembrance of the nuptial morn,
 When first you ty'd it on: Restore, she cry'd,
 This pledge of fond affection to the king;
 Tell him, howe'er unkind, I've yet deserv'd
 To wear no other chain than this of love;—
 Then wept a tender show'r. [*Herod takes the bracelet.*]

Herod. The time hath been,
 I'd not have seen my Mariamne drop
 One precious tear for all the radiant mines
 The womb of earth contains; but now her heart
 Is chang'd, and so must mine!—Yet if she craves
 To see me now, give orders: let the guard
 Conduct her to me. [*Exit Herod.*]

High-Pr. Now with speedy flight,
 Descend, celestial ministers of peace,
 Who kindle virtuous ardour, and preside
 O'er nuptial vows; aid with auspicious zeal,
 The firm re-union of those royal hearts:
 And never from your charge remove,
 'Till death's commission'd to divide their love! [*Exit.*]

Enter SOHEMUS and SALOME.

Sohe. Thus far with fate to friend, and greatly fir'd

With bright ambition, we 've pursu'd the path
To glory; and with swift and easy steps,
Approach the summit of imperial power.

Sal. But should the king's enfeebled soul relent,
And pardon Mariamne?

Sohe. She'll disclaim

To re-ascend the throne, or owe her life
To low submission: for the stubborn sense
Of genuine virtue in a royal mind,
Ne'er softens with affliction; but becomes
The more obdurate, when it once hath griev'd;
As metals after melting harder grow.

Enter SAMEAS.

Sal. Sameas, thou best of friends! thy wish'd
approach

By instinct I perceiv'd; "thy influence spreads
"Like rich perfumes, which, tho' invisible,
"Refresh the sense.

"*Sameas.* Madam, I hop'd my art
"Had well deserv'd a jewel of your own,
"T'engage my service: 't was too politic
"To feign a favour but to serve your cause,
"When the nice article of proof came on.

"*Sal.* Contemn that worthless pebble; we're
intent

"On far more glorious views; whole provinces
"Shall recompense thy love."

Sameas. Let us consult
Our common safety; dangers threaten round us.

Sal. What may'st thou mean ?

Sameas. Th' High-Priest hath won the king
To see the queen to night.

Sobe. Impossible !

Sameas. But now I met him speeding cross the
court ;

Round him a rabble of her menial slaves
Ran big with joy.

Sobe. Confound his holy craft !——
Fortune at once rolls back the bounteous flow
Of hope, and leaves us gasping on the shore.

[*Salome whispers Sohemus.*

I'll do it.

Sameas. What, my lord ?——What must we do ?

Sobe. Why—suffer greatly, since we cannot act !
Thy part remains to persevere, tho' racks
Strain every sinew smaller than the threads
Which form a spider's web.—Ne'er hope for grace.

Sameas. I'll risk the event and go——

[*Sobe. stabs him.*

Sobe. To hell !

To hell ! poor tim'rous wretch, “ and tell the devil—”
[*In the struggle Sameas wrests the dagger out of Sohemus's
hand ; and in falling backward he strikes it into
Salome's bosom, and dies.*

Princess ador'd and lov'd ; Oh !—speak !

Sal. Death ! Death !

Save me, O Sohemus, from that black troop
Of grizly shapes, “ which in fantastic dance
“ Frisk round, and call me hence.”—O, kind in
vain,

A fiery whirlwind bears me from thy arms
To seas of boiling sulphur ; the blue waves
Receive me to their bosom.—Down ! deep ! deep !
[*She dies.*]

Enter HEROD and PHERORAS, with Attendants.

Herod. What hideous sound of shrieks and dying
groans

Echo'd from hence, as if by violence
A soul had left her mansion unprepar'd !

Pher. Horrors ! our sister dead !

Sobe. That villain came [*Pointing to Sameas's body.*]

In all the gestures of extreme despair ;
Crying she brib'd him to accuse the queen ;
And having heard Arsinoe would return
To null his evidence, rage and remorse
Urg'd him to plunge the dagger in her breast,
And then he pierc'd himself.

Herod. “ O, Salome !

“ The jarring elements which compos'd thy frame,
“ Made thee aspiring, turbulent and bold : ”

In others woe was thy supreme delight ;
And most against my queen thy malice aim'd
Her venom'd shafts ; but now thy guilty blood
Will quench the flames, which thy infernal torch
Spread o'er the harvest of my nuptial joys.

Sobe. How blind, alas ! to fate, is the dim eye
Of dull mortality !

Herod. O, Sohemus !

A thrilling horror freezeth every vein,

G.

While I review the precipice of fate,
Where late I stood perplex'd ; but one step more
Had plung'd me in th' abyss of endless woe,
“ A most consummate wretch!—But here she comes,”

Enter MARIAMNE in a mourning habit.

“ Welcome as night with sweet refreshing shade,
“ And balmy dews, to the faint traveller ;
“ Who journies o'er a waste of burning sands,
“ With painful steps and slow——Remove the dead !
“ She hath no vengeful appetite to glut,
“ With such sad spectacles.”

[Exeunt all but Herod and Mariamne.]

Herod. Approach, my queen !
Thou dearest miracle of Nature's hand,
Adorn'd with all perfections !

Mari. Dare you trust
Your murd'ress near you ?

Herod. Thy soft innocence
Was form'd to kill with darts of keen desire ;
I beg those pleasing wounds : approach, my fair !
Heaven's ! at the sight of that celestial face,
Each savage passion from the soul retires ;
As wolves forsake the fold, when first the sun
Flames o'er the eastern hills. Oh ! thus, thus, thus,
I'll clasp thee ever to my heaving breast !
Thus on thy lips in glowing rapture seal
A firm eternal union of our souls !——

Mari. In vain !——They who dissolv'd the first,
have power
To cancel this.

Herod.
Sameas an
They've p
Of faction
Mari. I

Drank all
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Herod.
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Mari.

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Herod. Dismiss that groundless fear ;
 Sameas and Salome are now no more :
 They 've punish'd their own guilt, and the last breath
 Of faction spoke thy virtue greatly wrong'd.

Mari. But the same judge survives, whose credulous
 ear

Drank all that perjur'd malice could infuse.
 " You, who condemn'd me for the blackest crime,
 " On evidence too counterfeit and light
 " To cheat an idiot's eye, betray'd a will
 " Dispos'd to credit every feign'd report ;
 " Whene'er malignant passion shall provoke
 " Other artificers of fraud, t' assault
 " My life or honour."

Herod. That unkind reproach
 Would change to soft compassion, had you felt
 The stings of sorrow which transfix'd my soul,
 When first you were accus'd : I would not bear
 Such agonies again, for all the crowns
 Which e'er ambition sigh'd for.

Mari. To yourself
 You owe whate'er you suffered ; and your pain
 Was but the fancied torture of a dream :
 But wounds of honour bleed for ever new ;
 Their anguish is sincere ! My fame must bear
 The blast of censure, and the letter'd spleen
 Of future story.

Herod. No ! thy fame will shine
 More bright, emerging from this short eclipse :
 The marks of envy give distinguish'd grace

To virtue ; as indented scars adorn
The soldier's breast.

" *Mari.* I wish my innocence

" Wanted that mark of honour, which the tongue

" Of malice will miscall the brand of guilt.

" *Herod.* The whitest ermin on her skin may bear

" An accidental spot ; yet none accuse

" Her native purity, but call the stain

" The crime of fortune." To the doubtful world

My edict soon will vindicate thy fame ;

Lodge that, and all thy cares, within my breast ;

Where every gesture, word, and look inspire

The spirit of purest love.

Mari. For which I wear

This livery of death——It suits the day

Which gave me to your arms !

Herod. But now, disrob'd

Of those sad weeds and every gloomy thought,

Smile like an angel breaking from a cloud ;

While peace, and joy, and ever-young desire

Attend thee to my bed, " each wedded pair

" Shall make our bliss the measure of their vows !"

Mari. Your bed ! the tiger shall as soon persuade

The hunted deer to harbour in his den.——

Herod. Damp not my glowing passion with a thought
Of separation. " Did our dates extend

" To the same length the giant-race enjoy'd,

" When nature yet was young, I then should dread

" The sad idea of our last divorce :

" Tho' sure that many smiling centuries

" Would

But equal

So join'd,

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Herod.

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Herod.

"Would roll 'twixt death and us!" O! did thy love
But equal mine, we'd each in other live
So join'd, that when fate strikes we both might fall—
I'd not survive thy doom.

Mari. Nor can I yours.

Herod. The words are what I wish; but ill explain'd
By that stern look and haughty voice.

Mari. Enquire
Of that domestic oracle, your heart;
If that resolves not the mysterious sense,
Ask Sohemus——

Herod. Confusion!

Mari. Do you start,
With sudden rays of dawning truth amaz'd,
"As fiends would be, should the meridian sun
"Blaze on their black abodes?"

Herod. Can neither words,
Nor actions ought avail; but must disdain
Repay my generous passion? Is thy rage
Grown so implacable, no tender proofs
Are prevalent t' assuage it?

Mari. 'T was a proof
Of tender love, to doom me to the sword
"By such an order, as barbarian hate
"Would only dictate in the rage of war;
"And with that engine of clandestine death"
To arm the malice of my foe profess'd——
On Sohemus you safely might rely,
To send me soon to mingle with your dust.

Herod. Oh, villain! perjur'd villain! to betray

That charge on which depended all my peace !
 On which his life depended !—Nothing less
 Than the damn'd witchcraft of thy wicked charms,
 Could tempt him to the very cave of Death,
 To wanton with his darts. Tear him, ye fiends!—
 To that false cheek dissembling nature gave
 The blush of virtue, for a veil to lust.
 He breath'd that fatal secret to thy ear
 In amorous murmurs, when the slave was grown
 Frantic with ecstasy——

Mari. My fame defies

Th' envenom'd breath of slander ; all my hours
 Have kept severest virtue for their guard.
 But “ I presage, offended ” heaven prepares
 To punish that excess of virgin-love,
 By which betray'd, I gave my nuptial vow,
 Against the solemn sanction of our law,
 And to an alien's care transferr'd the charge
 Of pure religion ; who, to flatter Rome,
 Neglects her altars, and her faith profanes.

Herod. Guards——take her hence ! [*Guards enter.*]
 No foolish fond remorse
 Shall now delay my vengeance !—

[*The Guards lead off Mariamne.*]

Love, farewell !——*Hence, hence, I say !*
 Rather than doat on her polluted charms,
 My sword shall rip the passion from my heart.
 Adultery !——Ye violated heav'ns,
 Dart the red lightning wing'd with tenfold rage,
 To blast th' adulteress ! “ Why did ye forbear

"To rivet closer with hot thunder-bolts
 "The serpents twisted in the folds of lust?"

Enter PHERORAS.

Pheroras, Oh!—Ten thousand rebels arm;
 Grief, horror, shame, distraction!—they besiege
 The poor soul wav'ring in the fort of life,
 And wishing to surrender! Thy kind sword
 Might end this insurrection—Dar'st thou strike?

[Points to his breast.

Pher. Heaven shield from violence that sacred breast!
 "Fear, guilt, despair, and moon-struck phrenzy rush
 "On voluntary death: the wise and brave,
 "When the fierce storms of fortune round them roar,
 "Combat the billows with redoubled force:
 "Then, if they perish ere the port is gain'd:
 "They sink with decent pride; and from the deep
 "Honour retrieves them, bright as rising stars."
 Call reason to your aid, and with your friends
 Divide your care. Doubt not but Sohemus—

Herod. Thou nam'st the very scorpion which hath
 stung

The centre of my heart.

Pher. Then make his blood
 Balm for the wound.

Herod. The wound admits no cure.
 Nor reason, nor the healing hand of time,
 Can bring relief. But, heav'n inspire my heart,
 Before it breaks, with new devis'd revenge,

Equal to that perfidious villain's crime!—
Were his approaches frequent to the queen,
When I was absent?

Pher. No; he ever stood
The distant object of her hate.

Herod. With ease
They might elude your eye; but Salome
And Samcas sure were conscious of their crimes;
For which he murder'd both, and she prepar'd
The pois'nous bowl for me. But from that slave,
Tortures shall wring the truth I dread to know.
Secure him for the rack; and let the queen
Drink the same fatal draught she drugg'd for me:
Instant, with her own deathful art destroy
"Th' artificer of death. Oh, Mariamne!
"Why wouldst thou wrong my honour and my love,
"And urge this direful doom?" [Exit Pheroras.

Enter FLAMINIUS.

My Roman friend!
Your unexpected visit finds my court
In wild disorder.

Flam. Sir, the queen's desire
To see the prince, occasion'd my return
At this uncourtly hour.

Herod. Few hours have pass'd,
Since you beheld me in triumphant state:
Now like a meteor from a summer sky,
Ingloriously I'm fall'n!

Flam. Banish despair,

And all
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A page,
Herod.
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And all her gloomy train : doubt not but fate
In her large volume still for you reserves
A page, as full of glory as the past.

Herod. Glory, Flaminius!—Will an empty name,
A shining bubble, which the vulgar breath
Of thoughtless crowds can swell for whom they please,
E'er recompense the loss I must sustain?

My queen! my wife! the jewel of my soul!—

Flam. Mercy 's the brightest ornament of power;
And now most needful to preserve your peace.

Herod. Justice must be my mercy—She must die!—
She must!—

Flam. But, sir, 't is safer much to sheath
The sword of justice, since the destin'd blow
Will chiefly wound yourself. Without your queen,
Your palace, though with gay retinue throng'd,
Will seem a savage desert. "You must view
"The mother blooming in your beauteous child,
"Nor feel a father's joy. Each object here
"Will rouse the sad remembrance of the bliss
"You once possess'd with her." How will you wish
For that sweet converse, when the smiling hours
Danc'd to the music of her heav'nly voice,
And the short years were lost in dear delight!
But when her charms are silent, dismal change!
Slow sullen time on raven-wings will fly
Heavy and black! around you then you'll see
Your son, your nobles, and domestics chang'd;
For each, as their peculiar grief shall urge,
With pensive silence will upbraid the loss

Of mother, queen, or friend. But what 's the loss
Of mother, queen, or friend, compar'd to yours?
A wife! the best, the loveliest of her sex,
And late the best-belov'd! in the full pride
Of summer-beauty, like a poisonous weed,
Torn from the earth, and by her husband's hand
Unkindly cast to wither in the grave!

Herod. My fate would force from rigour's flinty eye
Even tears of blood. [Weeps.]

Flam. Oh, sir, reflect, if thus
The bare recital wounds your fancy now,
A yet more dreadful pain may pierce your heart!
Love may once more revive—vain hopeless love!
When the dear object of your longing soul
Lies mould'ring in the dust. “If so, the wretch
“Who, buried in a trance, returns to life,
“And walks distracted o'er the rattling bones
“Of his dead fathers, in the dreary vault
“Less horror feels, than sad remorse will raise
“Within your breast.”

Herod. Oh, Mariamne! lost,
To love for ever lost! to love and me!——
I've liv'd love's slave too long; but jealousy,
That yellow fiend, hath dipp'd the torch in gall,
And now 't will light no more!

Flam. If the queen 's false,
My wife hath been officious to her crimes,
And shares in the pollution. Let her plea
Be heard, and if she fails in her defence,

I'll slay her at your feet.

[*Flaminius goes out, and returns immediately with Arsinoe.*]

Herod. As heavenly peace

May sooth your anguish *at the hour of death*,

"When the flutt'ring soul

"Prepares to wing her last eternal flight,"

Assist my quiet, and resolve my doubts——

Was Sohemus admitted to the queen

Whilst I was gone to Rhodes ?

Arsi. Never, my lord !

Herod. Never !

Arsi. His name 's offensive to her ear ;

And for his person——no antipathy

In nature can be stronger.

Herod. So I thought ;

But such fictitious arts too oft conceal

Criminal correspondence : they might write ;

And doubtless did.

Arsi. That commerce could not 'scape

My notice, who, by constant duty bound,

Waited so near the queen.

Herod. What if she saw ?

Her interest then, and now her fears prevails

To seal the lips of truth.

Flam. Sir, not the frown

Of majesty, nor brandish'd thunder awes

A Roman spirit (such I hope she bears),

To make it start from the plain tracks of truth,

And deviate into falsehood.

Herod. Can the queen
 Pierce to the close recesses of the soul?
 "Are thoughts there visible, like the children's toys
 "Kept in a crystal house?" Does she retain
 Dæmons, to sit secure from mortal sight,
 In princes' cabinets, to learn the sum
 Of secret councils? Told they this decree:
 If Cæsar, to revenge the sacred faith
 I held with Antony, should to the sword
 Sentence my head, that hers should likewise fall.
 "Lest the proud successor who seiz'd my throne,
 "Should triumph in my bed?"—No, that resolve
 A carnal fiend imparted, and she paid
 His service with her honour!

Arsi. Royal sir,
 Her honour is unblemish'd; all the blame
 Transfer to my officious zeal—I told
 That fatal secret.

Herod. How! Did Sohemus
 Impart that most important charge to you?

Arsi. To me his vows of love were then address'd;
 Which, when disdain'd, with more persuasive force
 To recommend his passion, he reveal'd
 The dreadful mandate left in trust; and swore,
 That if you perish'd by the sword of Rome,
 My love alone was ransom for the life
 Of my dear royal mistress.

Herod. Fly, Oh, fly,
 Swift as the cherub to preserve his charge!
 Reverse the doom of death. [Exit Arsi.]

Is Sohemus

Secur'd for

Pher. S

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Herod.

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Enter MA

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*H. Pr.**Herod.**H. Pr.*

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Herod.

Oh, call,

Exert her

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Enter PHERORAS.

Is Sohemus

Secur'd for torture ?

Pher. Sir, he took th' alarm,
And fled for safety to the royal tow'r ;
The portal forc'd, the soldiers found him fall'n
On his self-slaught'ring sword, stretch'd on the ground,
Welt'ring in blood ; he speechless there expir'd.

Herod. Too far confiding in that traitor's skill
In arts of rule, he so misus'd my power,
That distant story may record my reign
From year to year, by many a cruel deed ;
"As the wild progress of a storm is trac'd
"By marks of desolation."

*Enter MARIAMNE supported by the High-Priest and
NARBAL ; ARSINOE following with the young Prince.*

Heav'ns avert

The bodings of my soul ! I fear the queen——

H. Pr. Oh, sir !——

Herod. Ha ! say'st thou ?——

H. Pr. A few moments more

Will rank her with the dead.

Arsi. Ere I arriv'd

The deadly draught was giv'n, which soon will end
The sense of all her woes.

Herod. And all my joys——

Oh, call, call our physicians ! now let art
Exert her saving pow'r, or ever prove
The minister of death !——

H

Mari. The venom's spread
Too far for art.

Herod. Oh, wish to live, and heav'n
Will crown thy wish with life! Heav'n will be just
To that bright innocence which I have wrong'd;
Wrong'd with excess of love, to fury wrought.
Oh, wretch, wretch, wretch!

Mari. Death's welcome, now I hear
My innocence avow'd.

Herod. I, I, whose life
Was bound with thine, by striving to secure
Thy beauties all my own, have kill'd the dove
I fondly grasp'd too close! Oh, see, she's pale!
Take, take, ye powers, my life to lengthen hers!
Chain me, ye furies, to your burning wheel!
Whip me ten thousand years with scorpions there,
To save her life!——

Mari. I pity and forgive
Your violence of passion, which hath wrought
The ruin of us both.

Herod. I ill deserve
Thy pardon or thy pity—Yet vouchsafe,
Thou fairest pattern of transcendent goodness!
Vouchsafe thy wretched lord a last embrace,
Whose soul is ready wing'd to wait on thine.
Oh, bless the dying penitent with peace,
“The moments which remain!”—

Mari. Good heav'n insure
Eternal peace to both!

Herod. Thou shalt not die—

[*They embrace.*]

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Thou art too young, too faultless, and too fair,
To fall a prey to death.

Mari. The thick'ning shades

O'er-spread my swimming eyes—Where is my child?
Bring him, poor babe! to take a parting kiss——

Farewel!—" I'm now at peace." [*She dies.*

" *H. Pr.* In that soft sigh

" The gentle spirit soar'd.

" *Arsi.* Oh, dead, dead, dead!"

Herod. Then, Death, strike on!

Fate, thou hast done thy worst!—— [*He faints.*

Pher. My royal brother! Oh!——

" *Nar.* My gracious lord!——"

H. Pr. Good heav'n restore to wretched Palestine
Her sole support and grace!

Herod. What minister [*Raising himself.*

Of this dark realm art thou?—If 'tis thy post

To guide the dead through this disastrous gloom,

Lead to that mournful mansion, where the ghosts

Of those abide, whom fatal beauty sent

Untimely to the shades——See, see, she soars!—

How bright a track she leaves along the sky;

And looks with pity down! Oh, see, she rests

On the soft fleece of yonder purple cloud,

Where angels fan her with their golden plumes!

Stay, Mariamne, stay!—— [*He sinks into their arms.*

Pher. Oh, from his face

The blush of life retires!

" *Nar.* His bosom heaves

" With strong convulsive throes."

H ij

Flam. Raise him, my lords.

Herod. Alas, forbear! ye but prolong the pains
Of lab'ring nature—Let me sink to peace!

“ And may oblivion cast her sable veil

“ O'er my sad story, and conceal the crimes

“ Of majesty misled.” My urn, alas!

Can hope for no compassion: when the doom

Of my dear, lovely, virtuous queen is told,

The tears will freeze on Pity's gentle cheek,

And not bedew my ashes——To your care [To Fla.

Receive this royal orphan, and implore

Cæsar's protection to preserve his crown:

And when, mature in manhood, he receives

A consort to his throne, may every grace

And every virtue join, to make her stil'd

The Mariamne of th' admiring age;

“ May sweet complaisance, honour, dear esteem,

“ And mutual faith cement their mutual joys!”

But ever may he shun too fond excess,

“ That soft, seducing impotence of mind.”

By which subdu'd, his wretched father fell,

Led by imperious love, a tortur'd slave,

To the sad refuge of an early grave. [Dies.

Flam. *Oh, may oblivion cast her sable veil*

O'er this sad story, and conceal the crimes

Of majesty misled;

Who, by the force of jealousy o'er-thrown,

Tarnish'd his glories and disgrac'd his throne!

[Exeunt Omnes.

THE END.

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